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THE
D U T Y
OF
CHURCHWARDENS
RESPECTING
THE CHURCH.



BY
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TO
THE REVEREND
JOSEPH PLYMLEY, M. A.
ARCHDEACON OF SALOP.
IN THE DIOCESE OF HEREFORD,
THESE HINTS,
ON A SUBJECT
WHEREIN HIS ARCHDEACONRY AND THE PUBLIC
ARE MUCH INDEBTED TO HIM,
ARE,
WITH SINCERE ESTEEM,
INSCRIBED.

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THE DUTY
OF
CHURCHWARDENS
RESPECTING
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CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE principal duty of Churchwardens, as their name implies, is the Care of the Church. They are Ecclesiastical Officers appointed for that purpose. The Freehold of the Church, and the Government(*a*) thereof, are committed to the Rector, or Vicar: the Care of the Church, in certain points, is committed to the Churchwardens: and all are answerable to the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction for the discharge of their respective trusts.

The Care of the Church committed to the Churchwardens respects Five Points.

1. The Fabric, or Building. 2. The Utensils and Furniture. 3. The Churchyard.
4. Certain matters of good order concerning the Church and Churchyard. 5. The Endowments of the Church.

CHAP. II.

OF THE FABRIC, OR BUILDING.

The Churchwardens are bound to see that the whole Fabric of the Church be kept in proper repair: namely, the Nave or Body, the Chancel, the Isles or Transepts, the Belfry, the Porch, and every other building connected with the Church; every thing fixed to the Freehold thereof, as Pulpit, Reading Desk, Font, Seats, Bells, and (usually) the Railing round the Communion Table. Such parts as are to be maintained at the expence of the Parish, the Churchwardens themselves are to repair; such as are to be maintained by other persons, the

Churchwardens are to call upon those persons to repair.

The proper repair of any Building is such as is suited, in plan, materials, and workmanship, to the Nature and Design of the Building. The proper repair of a Dwelling-house is of one kind: that of a Barn or Stable, of another: and proper repairs of two dwelling-houses may vary considerably according to the Uses and the Inhabitants. A Church is a Building dedicated to the honour and service of Almighty God, and to the edification of Christian People: wherein prayer is to be offered to God, his word is to be read and preached, and his sacraments are to be administered; wherein we have special reason to hope for his blessing on our pious addresses and holy resolutions. We therefore rightly call it the HOUSE OF GOD, and if we duly frequent it, we shall find it the "Gate to Heaven." This house then ought to be repaired and kept in such a manner, as may shew the respect of the Parishioners for its holy uses, and inspire them with re-

verence when they enter into it. For this reason,

I. The repair of a Church ought to be SUBSTANTIAL. Scanty repairs done at different times, with various forms, materials, and workmanship, some part or other always in danger from wind and weather, and frequently in actual decay, shew little respect for the sacred nature, and religious use, of the Building, and small desire to have it beheld with reverence.

The repair of a Church ought to be substantial for two other reasons. One of these is a reason of Prudence: because it is a Large and Lofty Building; wherein a small decay may spread wide, and produce a great ruin; and wherein frequent reparations are more expensive than in small structures, on account of the repeated erection of high scaffolding. The other is a reason of Justice: because it is a Public Building, which must be kept up for ever by the Parishioners. Slight and cheap repairs will in the end bring on the necessity of stout and costly

ones; and the present parishioners, by saving themselves from a small rate, will bring a heavy one upon their children, and others who are to come after them.

I conclude, therefore, that scanty repairs of a Church are equally uncreditable to the Piety, the Prudence, and the Justice, of a Parish: and I lay it down as a rule, that every Churchwarden is bound to keep his Church in substantial repair, as a Building dedicated to the honour and service of God, and to the edification of Christian People; as a Building Large and Lofty, and consequently of great expence if suffered to decay, or, even, to want frequent reparations; and as a Public Building, designed for Perpetuity, which every generation ought in their turn, in fair proportion, to maintain.

II. The Repair of a Church ought to be **DECENT**; that is, becoming its Nature and Design, as above stated. That the Roof, Walls, Pavement, Doors, Windows, Pulpit, Reading Desk, Font, Seats, Bells, and

Railing round the Communion Table, should be entirely perfect, is a necessary part of Substantial repair. It is moreover necessary as a part of Decent repair, that the Walls should, on the outside, be well Pointed or Plaistered, as the case may be; and should, on the inside, be Plaistered and Lime-washed, in white, or other proper colour, and constantly preserved from any discolouring or decay; that the Creed, Commandments, or other sentences written on the walls, should be preserved in like manner. It is to be wished, when it can be done, that the Seats should be of the same materials, height, and workmanship.

III. The Repair of a Church ought to be COMFORTABLE: that is, such as will enable the Parishioners of all ages and conditions, to assemble therein without danger to their healths from dampness or other cold.

One cause of a Church being damp is the Floor being below the level of the Church-yard. This evil may be remedied, or diminished, by a Drain, open or shut, with

a proper fall, made round the Church on the outside, at sufficient distance from the foundation, below the level of the Floor. When the whole scite of the Church and Churchyard is low, a deep drain cut round the Churchyard also will contribute considerably to the same purpose.

Another cause of dampness is, when the Floors of the Seats are not boarded.

Another, universal, cause of dampness, and of the most pernicious kind, is the want of Circulation of Air. No room whatever can be wholesome, which is shut up continually, with the exception of the Door being opened a few hours in the week; no Church particularly can be wholesome when so shut up, on account of the natural dampness of a stone pavement, and also such a pavement lying neither upon Sleepers nor Arches. This evil is effectually remedied by two or more Large Casements, in opposite sides of the Church, opened, regularly and frequently, between the days and hours of Divine Service.

The chief cause of a Church being cold besides its dampness, is the want of a Ceiling. Without a ceiling the roof is no more a protection from cold, than the roof of a tiled Barn. It may indeed, by giving some circulation of air, diminish the dampness. But the Congregation suffer more by the cold, (which they cannot shut out, as they can by shutting the casements,) than they gain by diminishing the dampness, (which casements, daily opened, remove entirely.) Moreover an unceiled roof often increases the dampness; as, on a fall of snow, or of rain with a searching wind, it lets in more wet than can be dried up completely in many days.

Our Ancestors indeed, in many instances, bore this inconveniency of a Church Unceiled. But we are to consider that their Houses were as much inferior in warmth to the generality of our Houses, as their Churches were to many of our Churches. When a family came out of a large Manor Hall, or a Farm House little warmer than

a stable, into a Church exposed to a current of air over their heads, and now and then to rain or snow, the change was small, either to their Feeling or their Constitutions: but now that they come from Close Carpeted Parlours, and Warm Farm Kitchens, or other comfortable apartments, it is great: and though young and healthy persons may, and ought to, bear it, the old and weakly are in danger of suffering by it; and are frequently kept by their fears from Divine Service for weeks and months together. It is moreover right on the former point of Decency, that the improvements of our Churches should bear some proportion to the improvements of our Houses. David thought so, when, in the flourishing state of his Country, he desired to build the Temple; saying, "I dwell in a house of Cedar, but the Ark of God dwells within Curtains;" in a moveable tent. Good men have thought so in all ages. Our Forefathers acted agreeably to this just sentiment, when they built our Cathedrals and Parish

Churches, in a venerable style suitable to their times and manners: and the last and present generation have, in numerous instances, pursued the same sentiment, in improving them with accommodations and ornaments suitable to Theirs. There is not a Diocese in the kingdom, in which there are not examples of this Christian Spirit, in the single munificence of some Gentleman, or the united liberality of a Parish. The place where I write (*b*) is a striking example: and there are many others in this Diocese. (*c*) In all the instances (with which I happen to be acquainted,) of Parish Churches repaired, improved, or rebuilt, whether by private munificence, or public subscription, or a parish rate, the Ceiling has made a part: and I have not heard of any instance in the kingdom, of a new Church or Chapel being erected without a Ceiling. Collecting from these facts the GENERAL SENTIMENT on the subject, and arguing on the ground of Decency and Comfort in the present improved state of

public and private Buildings, I cannot persuade myself that a Church Unceiled is in Proper Repair.

As the Fabrics of Churches are maintained by the Occupiers of Lands, whether owners or renters, they may, in some small parishes, find it inconvenient to advance money for ceiling their Church: in such circumstances it is highly probable that the Landlords of rented estates would, on application, contribute to a work so beneficial to religion, so desirable for their tenants, and so creditable to their estates.

The methods which are necessary to put a Church in Comfortable repair, contribute to preserve it in Decent repair. A dry circulating air preserves the Lime-wash, Plaster, and Furniture: whereas a damp stagnated air discolours the Lime-wash, dissolves the Plaster, and injures, more or less, the Seats, Books, Cushions, and Coverings; and the evil is aggravated by the occasional beating in of rain or snow. These injuries indeed may be repaired, though they seldom

are, at a continual expence and trouble : but the injury done to the bodily health of some who attend Divine Service, and to the spiritual health of many who are deterred from it, and of others who are misled by their example, is in many instances irreparable.

After seeing that the Fabric of the Church, and every thing fixed to the Freehold thereof, be kept in Proper Repair, it is a further duty of the Churchwardens to observe if any alterations be made in the Fabric, or any thing new be fixed to the Freehold, without the Licence of the Bishop, (*d*) or (in smaller cases) the approbation of the Rector or Vicar; (*e*) lest such alterations or new erections may disfigure the Church, or incommode the Congregation.

CHAP. III.

OF THE UTENSILS AND FURNITURE.

The Utensils and Furniture of the Church are,

The Communion Table; and the Railing round it, if not fixed. A Carpet or

Covering for the Table. A Linen Cloth for the Table, and a Napkin. A Patin or Plate. A Flagon or Stoop. A Cup or Chalice. A Bafin for the Offerings. Mats for the Ministers and Communicants.

A Cloth, and Cushion, and Mat, for the Pulpit. A Cloth and Mat for the Reading Desk. A Large Bible and Prayer Book for the Minister. Two Surplices. A Prayer Book and Mat for the Clerk.

A Bafin for the Font. Mats for the Minister and Clerk, Godfathers, and Godmothers, and other attendants at the Font.

A Table of prohibited Marriages. A Poor's Box.

A Bier and Cloth. Bells and Ropes. A Chest, with three different Locks; the Keys to be kept, one by the Minister, and one by each Churchwarden.

The Churchwardens are to see that all these articles are preserved and kept in repair.

To these necessary articles there are others added in some Churches for convenience or

ornament, such as, Curtains, Candlesticks, Moveable Seats or Benches, Clock, Chimes, Organ; which, whenever so added, are equally under the care of the Churchwardens.

The Churchwardens are also to provide Bread and Wine for the Communion. They are specially directed to provide "fine white bread, and good and wholesome wine:" this is a point of religious decency, which I mention, because I have known it carelessly executed.

They are, moreover, to provide a Register for Christenings and Burials; and for Marriages and Banns of Marriage: a Book for the Parish Accounts: and, lastly, a List of the Utensils and Furniture of the Church: which Register, Account Book, and List, are to be kept in the Chest. If the Register be, for convenience, usually kept in the Parsonage or Vicarage House, it ought however, when the Incumbent is Non-resident, or the Benefice vacant, always to be kept in the Chest. A Transcript of the

Register is to be carried annually to the Bishop's Registry some time in the month of January. And the List of the Utenfils and Furniture is to be exhibited to the Arch-deacon at his Parochial Visitation.

Neither the Fabric, nor the Utenfils and Furniture, of a Church can be considered as in proper Repair, unless the whole be kept PERFECTLY CLEAN. Decency and Comfort require this. Neglect of cleanliness shews little reverence to the House of God: and every place becomes unwholesome, in proportion as it becomes dirty. The Surplice, Communion Cloth, and Napkin, in particular, ought always to be clean and white: and these, with the other Furniture most liable to injury, should be carefully covered between the times of Divine Service.

The office of keeping clean the Church, and Utenfils and Furniture, is generally performed by the Clerk or Sexton: but it lies upon the Churchwardens to take care that it be well performed: and to provide brushes

and other proper instruments: and to pay the Clerk or Sexton for doing it. The stipend of Clerk and Sexton is generally small; handed down from times when the necessaries of life were much cheaper: it is worthy the generosity, indeed the justice, of every Parish to proportion it to the present prices.

CHAP. IV.

OF THE CHURCHYARD.

The duty of Churchwardens concerning the Churchyard is to take care that it be well Fenced "with walls, rails, or pales, as have been in each place accustomed:" and that the Gates, the Gate-Porch, (if any,) and the Paths leading through the Churchyard to the Church, be kept in perfect repair. In this work they are carefully to consult Decency. It is not fitting that the gates of a Churchyard should be like the gates of a Field or Farmyard. A trifling expence in workmanship and paint would make a becoming difference: and the ex-

pence of paint will be defrayed by the duration of the work. The decent appearance of the Fences ought also to be considered. When they are maintained by a Rate, (which is the best method) they may be kept all in one form. But if (by custom) they are maintained, in parcels, by different persons, the Churchwardens are to call strictly upon each person to preserve his portion in perfect repair and decent form. The Churchwardens are also to see that the Accustomed Church Ways, from the houses of the Parishioners to the Churchyard, be kept in due repair at the charge of the Parish, or any person to whom the repairing of them may belong.

The Freehold of the Churchyard, and the Use of the Herbage, are in the Rector or Vicar. It becomes him to keep the herbage in decent appearance, free from Rubbish, Weeds, and Briars. But if by his inattention, or the neglect of the Occupier of the herbage, or the intrusion of idle persons, it be not so kept, it is the duty of the Church-

wardens to make proper application, and procure these indecencies to be removed. On this account, as well as for the preservation of the Walls and Windows of the Church, they ought to prevent all persons from idling or playing in the Churchyard.

The principal cause of indecencies in a Churchyard is the want of proper "Walls, " Rails, or Pales," and Gates regularly shut. I wonder that the Inhabitants of any Parish can see, without regret, their Churchyard, which surrounds their place of Worship, and contains the bodies of their Fathers, Families, and Friends, dishonoured by filth, nettles, and briars; ill-fenced, and laid waste; less regarded than the worst of their own inclosures, or the meanest garden in their Town or Village; trampled sometimes, and torn up, by unseemly animals, "like the " face of the field in the portion of Jezreel;" the " bones" of departed Christians " lying " scattered about the pit, like as when one " breaketh and heweth wood upon the

“earth.” I am surpris’d that they do not reflect how unbecoming and disgraceful this appearance is, and how small expence and trouble would remove it.

The Churchwardens are to observe, if any new Doors, Gates, or Roads, be made into, or through, the Churchyard from houses or lands adjoining, or any boundaries of the Churchyard be altered, or any infringement be committed thereon, without the consent of the Rector or Vicar, and the Licence of the Bishop.

CHAP. V.

OF CERTAIN MATTERS OF GOOD ORDER CONCERNING THE CHURCH AND CHURCHYARD.

It is to be hoped that every Churchwarden hath been a regular attendant at Church before he held the Office: otherwise he was not very fit to be chosen into it. When he is in the Office, it is a part of his Official, as well as Christian, duty to be constantly

at Church. For he is to prevent, or correct, all disorderly behaviour in the Church. He is not to suffer any idle persons to abide in the Churchporch or Churchyard during the time of Divine Service. He is to prevent tipling in Alehouses during Divine Service; and the exercise of any worldly calling or unlawful pastimes on the Lord's Day. These offences are punishable, by Fine, on conviction before a Magistrate, *(f)* as well as by Ecclesiastical Censure.

The Churchwarden, or other fit person, is to collect the Alms at the Communion.

The Churchwarden is to observe, if Divine Service be not duly performed, or other Ministerial Duty be neglected.

He is not to suffer any Muster of Soldiers, or any Fairs, Markets, or Traffics, to be holden in the Churchyard.

He is not to suffer any Plays, Feasts, Church Ales, Drinkings, or any other profane Usage, in the Nave, Chancel, Belfry,

or other part of the Church, or in the Churchyard.

He is not to suffer the Bells to be rung at any time, without good cause to be allowed by the Minister and his Brother Churchwarden.

CHAP. VI.

OF THE ENDOWMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

The Endowments of the Church are,

1. The Rectorial or Vicarial Buildings, the glebe lands, the tithes, money payments, and all other rights appertaining to the Benefice. The Minister and Churchwardens are to keep a terrier of these in the Chest: and the Churchwardens are to carry an authentic copy thereof to the Bishop's Registry at every Episcopal Visitation, or at such other time as the Bishop shall appoint. The Terrier is to be signed by the Minister, Churchwardens, and other principal inhabitants; inserting, from time to time, the names of

the *present* owners and renters of lands abutting upon the glebe. (g)

II. All houses, lands, or money payments, vested in the Minister, Churchwardens, or other Trustees, for the reparation, ornament, or other uses, of the Church.

III. Of a similar nature, though not strictly endowments of the Church, are all houses, lands, or money payments, vested in like manner for the use of the Poor; whether for Schools, Hospitals, Bread, or any other benefit. A full and exact account of all these Benefactions is to be kept in the Chest: and an Abstract of them hung up on a Tablet in the Church.

The Churchwardens are to observe if the Rectorial or Vicarial Buildings be suffered to decay: or any timber trees growing on the glebe lands be applied to other use, than the reparation or improvement of the Buildings, Fences, or Chancel: or any meres or other land-marks thereof be re-

moved: or any other Waste be committed thereon.

They are to observe also, if any waste be committed upon the houses and lands, or any diminution suffered of the money payments, above-mentioned, vested in trust for the Church, or Poor: or if the Revenues thereof be not reasonably improved, or be not duly collected, or be misapplied, or abused: or if the School Master, or Mistrefs, neglect his or her duty.

CHAP. VII.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS OF CHURCHWARDENS.

The Churchwardens have one more duty respecting the Church. They are bound, at the Visitations, to make TRUE PRESENTMENT of every defect in ANY of the points which I have laid before them.

It is to be hoped that no Churchwarden will want other inducement to discharge these several duties, than his Oath of Office, his Reverence for Religion, and his Regard

for the Welfare and Credit of his Parish. But if any one be insensible to these moral obligations, it is proper to remind him, that he is under legal obligations also. For,

I. If he do not within a time limited conform to the directions given by the Archdeacon at his Parochial, or other, Visitation, concerning the Fabric of the Church, the Utensils and Furniture thereof, or Churchyard, he is subject to the Censure of the Archdeacon's Court.

II. He is at all times subject to the Inquiry and Censure of the Bishop's Court, for neglect of his duty in any of the points which I have laid before him, upon the presentment of the Minister, or any Parishioner, or without any presentment.

III. If he make a false presentment concerning these points, he is subject to the Censure of either Court for Perjury: and he is particularly to observe, that a presentment which omits a thing which ought to be presented, is a false presentment.

CHURCHWARDENS have several other duties by virtue of their Office, and by divers Acts of Parliament. I have here undertaken to lay before them such only as respect the CHURCH.

CHAP. VIII.

CONCLUSION.

There is no one duty so likely to make us Good and Happy, as a constant attendance on the House of God: because there we learn his will; we form resolutions to do it; we pray for his grace to enable us to do it; we implore his blessing on our souls, our bodies, and our substance. Our attendance on this House, and our reverence for it, is likely to be greater, when it is repaired, adorned, and furnished, in a Substantial, Decent, Comfortable, manner. It is well worth the expence and trouble of a Christian Congregation, to set about this good work without delay, and perform it completely and effectually; if they are in moderate circumstances, to the extent which

the Law requires; if they are prosperous or wealthy, with such proper additions, as their convenience, taste, and piety, may suggest. This religious zeal will increase the affection and diligence of their Minister, and will invite their families and neighbours to a more constant attendance on public worship and instruction. They will have the satisfaction and honour of promoting Religion in their own days; and will leave the visible marks of their Piety to their Children and others after them, when they shall "be gone hence
" and be no more seen."(b)

NOTES.

(a) **A**S the name Rector denotes ; and the Vicar is his substitute: that is, every Rector or Vicar is bound to superintend the due repair, and reverent usage, of the Church, and of every thing belonging to it: (for which reason he presides at Vestries, although he do not contribute to the Church-rate :) to see that nothing improper be placed, or done, in the Church or Churchyard: to fix the hours of Divine Service, consulting the convenience of the Congregation: to observe that Divine Service be, in all its parts and circumstances, performed by Himself (or Assistant) and the Congregation, according to the Rubric: to regulate the time for Occasional Offices, singing of Psalms, Playing of the Organ (if any,) and other particulars not defined by the Rubric: to the end that “all things may be done decently and in order.” “Rector tantum
 “jus in Ecclesiâ Parochiali habet, quantum

“ Prælatas (i. e. Dean, Master, Custos, &c.)
 “ in Ecclesiâ Collegiatâ.”

In Churches and Chapels where there is no Rector or Vicar, the Perpetual Curate has nearly the same situation and duties.

(b) STOKES-EDITH, rebuilt by Thomas Foley, Esquire.

(c) Among others,
 TARRINGTON, improved by Thomas Lord Foley.

SHOBDON, rebuilt by Lord Viscount Bateman.

LETON, improved by John Freeman, Esquire.

STANFORD, rebuilt by Sir Edward Winnington, Bart.

The fine Gothic Church of CHIRBURY, new floored, pewed, ceiled, and otherwise improved, by the Land-owners, Improprator, and Inhabitants.

ALBERBURY, improved in like manner by the Parishioners: which Church I mention among many others lately improved in the Archdeaconry of Salop, and particularly in

the Deanery of Pontesbury, on account of the perfect form and dryness given to the walls by BATTENING.

(d) Some few Churches are under the Peculiar Jurisdiction of a Dean, Prebendary, or other Superior; who has, under certain limitations and restrictions, the same authority as the Bishop in these matters.

(e) A grave-stone, for example, or the like. The same applies to the Churchyard.

(f) Namely, being absent from Church on Sunday, or not abiding there during Divine Service, or behaving disorderly there, 1s.

Drinking at Alehouses, except on Working Days, and at Seasons therein allowed by the Act of Parliament, 3s. 4d.

Owner of the House permitting it, 10s.

Butchers Killing, or Selling, Meat on Sunday, 6s. 8d.

Selling, or Exposing to Sale, any Wares or Goods on Sunday, 5s.

Carriers, Waggoners, Drovers, Horse Courfers, &c. travelling on Sunday, 20s.

Exercising any Worldly Calling on Sunday, 5s.

Persons assembling on Sunday within their own parish for any unlawful pastime; or assembling out of their own parishes for any pastime whatsoever; 3s. 4d.

(g) In order to preserve the rights of the Benefice with respect to Tithes, and of the Parish with respect to Church Rates and other Assessments, the Minister and Churchwardens, with other inhabitants, ought annually, or at short intervals, to PERAMBULATE, or view the boundaries of their parish.

(b) Congregations disposed to improve their Churches, will do well to read Mr. Archdeacon PLYMLEY'S Charges on this subject.

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